

Brethren Evangelist

"I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life."—Jesus

VOLUME XXIII

ASHLAND, O., THURSDAY, JANUARY 3, 1901.

No. 1.

Editorial

The Twentieth Century

In the hand of Almighty God is a book, and in that book is a chapter the title of which reads, when translated, The Twentieth Century. We do not know what century it is in the calendar of eternity, where "a day is as a thousand years." That which to us seems so long a period, outspanning the longest earthly pilgrimage, is but little more than an hour in one of God's days. Whole generations come and go in that little hour of the eternities. Nations rise and fall. Kingdoms, republics, empires flash their fleeting splendors against the sky, and die out in darkness. We run our little course, we live our lives of feverish interest, of swelling importance, of much strife and much sorrow, of prosperity and adversity, all within the compass of less than an hour of this circle of time which God calls a day. As this little planet is but a speck upon the vast expanse of space, so is our life but an instant against the illimitable duration behind and before us. "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?"

But there is a dignity in this little creature of a day, soiled as he may be with the stains of his mother earth, a dignity which he derives from that "image and likeness of God" in which he was created. One of the prerogatives of that "likeness" is a partial knowledge of the future, so much as has been revealed, and so much as analogy may illuminate of that which is not revealed. Arguing from the wonderful discoveries and inventions of the past century, we confidently expect new and still more wonderful triumphs in the century before us. Science enters upon the new century inspired by the tremendous enthusiasm which comes of a great initial success. But we have only scratched the surface of Nature's inexhaustible treasures. We have only just begun to harvest her forces. The poet who exhorted us to hitch our chariot to a star ought to have foreseen by virtue of his prophetic office, that the steed of the world's progress was not to be an inaccessible star, but the accessible, the fleet, the unwearied, the invincible, the obedient lightnings. "He maketh his ministers a flaming fire" said the Psalmist of Jehovah. And he that was made in the divine "likeness" also in these last days maketh a flaming fire his minister.

Among a multitude of reflections which this train of thought suggests, we present this: Will the new century find a like zeal for the advancement of the kingdom of heaven in the midst of these new and enthusiastic generations, of wonder builders, impatiently advancing upon the stage? Woe be to the new century, and woe be to the world, if the splendid materialism upon which we are entering shall not

be tempered and illuminated by a still more splendid evangelism. How shall it be accomplished? We go to the root of all moral and social problems, and that root is evangelism, and we ask, How is it to be accomplished? How are we to give that predominance to the forces of righteousness which will enable them to sweep the field? Who can answer this question? We may answer as much as we know, and we can not say a better word than this, that at the beginning of a new century, all whose minds have, even in a slight measure, received the elevation of the Christ kingdom, should begin by praying Christ to come to his own. How much, let us ask, is there in me that is his own? How much of me can he use in this battle of his, this warfare, this fierce battle of the ages, this strenuous conflict with the serried ranks of evil? Let the question pass from the individual to the congregation, its officers, its pastor. Let it pass from thence to the great institutions of the church, its publishing work, its schools. How much of all this is Christ's own, a channel thru which he can pour "rivers of living water" into the moral deserts and desolations all around us?

This is the chief question. Others follow; of consecration, of enlightened and thorough training, of thorough organization, so that the whole force of the church can be delivered as one man, of both doctrine, discipline, organization, plan of work, co operation, everything in fact pertaining to the church, emancipated from useless traditions, and ordered with sole reference to the greatest efficiency in the salvation of the greatest possible number of immortal souls.

Our Field

The vital principle of Brethren theology is, that *obedience* is the foundation of Christian character. Perhaps we go further than this and hold in effect that obedience is essential to salvation. This is of course strong language, and should not be held unless there is an unequivocal scriptural foundation for it. It also requires accurate definition, for we must not for a moment give color to the idea that by our obedience we purchase salvation, as a hireling his wages. There is nothing that we can do that will earn for us eternal life. But, it is also a self-evident proposition that we can not live a life of disobedience and secure the salvation of our souls. Obedience then indicates a saved state, and wilful disobedience indicates an unsaved state. So much for the relation of obedience to salvation. On the other hand, the relation between obedience and Christian character, growth in grace, growth in usefulness, is as cause to effect. Now the Brethren theology, in all the branches of the church, has emphasized obedience as no other denomination has done, and in Christian doctrine is the distinctive con-